

Khamti language

Khamti language (Khamti: လိၣ်တုံတဲးဂံးတီၣ်; (Khamti written), Khamti: ဂၢၤမံးတဲးဂံးတီၣ်; (Khamti spoken) is a Southwestern Tai language spoken in Burma and India by the Khamti people.

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Khamti	
Region	Burma, India
Ethnicity	Khamti people
<div>Native speakers</div>	13,000 (2000–2007) ^[1]
<div>Language family</div>	<div>Kra–Dai <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tai<ul style="list-style-type: none">Southwestern<ul style="list-style-type: none">Northwestern<ul style="list-style-type: none">Khamti</div>
<div>Writing system</div>	Lik-Tai ^[2]
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	kht
Glottolog	kham1290 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/kham1290) ^[3]



Diorama of Khamti people in Jawaharlal Nehru Museum, Itanagar.

Demographics

In Burma, Khamti is spoken by 3,500 in Sagaing Region, near Myitkyina and by 4,500 in Kachin State, Putao District (both reported in 2000). In India, it is spoken by 5,000 in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, in the Dikrong Valley, Narayanpur, and north bank of the Brahmaputra (reported in 2007).

Three dialects of Khamti are known: North Burma Khamti, Assam Khamti, and Sinkaling Khamti. All speakers of Khamti are bilingual, largely in Assamese and Burmese.^[4]

Name

"Khamti" has been variously rendered *Hkamti*, *Khampti*, *Khamti Shan*, *Khampti Shan*, *Khandi Shan*, *Kam Ti*, *Tai Kam Ti*, *Tai-Khamti*, *Kamti*, *Hkampti Shan*, and *Khampti Sam*.^[4]

History

The language seems to have originated around Mogoung in Upper Burma.^[5] Mung Kang was captured, a large group of Khamtis moved to the north and east of Lakhimpur. In the year 1850, 300–400 Khamtis settled in Assam.^[6]

Phonology

Initial consonants

Khamti has the following initial consonants^{[7][8]}:

		<u>Bilabial</u>		<u>Alveolar</u>		<u>Palatal</u>		<u>Velar</u>		<u>Glottal</u>	
		voiceless	voiced	voiceless	voiced	voiceless	voiced	voiceless	voiced	voiceless	voiced
<u>Plosive</u>	<u>Tenuis</u>	p		t		c		k		ʔ	
	<u>Aspirated</u>	p ^h		t ^h				k ^h			
<u>Nasal</u>			m		n		ɲ		ŋ		
<u>Fricative</u>				s						h	
<u>Lateral</u>					l						
<u>Lateral</u>					r						
<u>Semi-vowel</u>							j		w		

Note: only the variety found in Myanmar uses the palatal nasal /ɲ/ and the rhotic /r/.^[8]

Final consonants

Khamti has the following final consonants:

		<u>Bilabial</u>		<u>Alveolar</u>		<u>Palatal</u>		<u>Velar</u>		<u>Glottal</u>	
		voiceless	voiced	voiceless	voiced	voiceless	voiced	voiceless	voiced	voiceless	voiced
<u>Plosive</u>	<u>Tenuis</u>	p		t				k		ʔ	
	<u>Aspirated</u>										
<u>Nasal</u>			m		n				ŋ		
<u>Semi-vowel</u>							j		w		

-[w] occurs after front vowels and [a]-, -[j] occurs after back vowels and [a]-.^[2]

Vowels

The Khamti language as found in Myanmar uses the following vowels^[8]:

	<u>Front</u>		<u>Back</u>			
	<u>unr.</u>		<u>unr.</u>		<u>rnd.</u>	
	<u>short</u>	<u>long</u>	<u>short</u>	<u>long</u>	<u>short</u>	<u>long</u>
<u>Close</u>	i	i:	ʍ	ʍ:	u	u:
<u>Mid</u>	e		ɤ		o	
<u>Open</u>	ɛ		a	a:	ɔ	
<u>Diphthong</u>	ia		aw		ua	

Tones

Khamti uses five tones, namely: low falling /21/, mid falling /42/, high falling /53/, mid rising /34/ and high level /55/.^[8]

Grammar

Syntax

Unlike other Tai languages that display SVO word order, Khamti has SOV word order.^[9]

Nouns

Nouns are divided into common nouns and proper nouns.^[10]

Common nouns

Common nouns can pluralized by adding /nai1 khau/ behind the noun. Common nouns are class categorized by using classifiers such as the generic /an3/, /ko1/ for people and /to1/ for animals.^[10]

Proper nouns

People's names and place names are classified as proper nouns. Khamti prefixes people's names, depending on the social class or status of that person. These prefixes are gender specific. The prefix for Miss is /na:ng4/ and the prefix for Mr is /tsa:i3/. A prefix for Mr used to respectfully address a male of higher status is /tsau2/ or /tsau2 nuai/.^[10]

Pronouns

Khamti uses a triparte pronoun system, consisting of singular, dual and plural forms. The dual form and the first person plural form are further divided between inclusive and exclusive forms. The following set of pronouns are the pronouns found in the Khamti language^[10]:

Word	Meaning
/kau3/	I (1sg)
/ha:4/	Me and you (1d inc)
/hang4 khe:u/	Me and him/her (1d exc)
/haw1/	We (1pl)
/maeu4/	You (2sg)
/suang khe:u/	You two (2d)
/man4/	He/She/It (3sg)
/suang kha:/	Those two (3d)
/khau/	They (3pl)

Demonstratives

Khamti uses the following demonstratives^[10] :

Demonstratives	Singular	Plural
Near	/an3 nai1/, 'this'	/an3 nai1 nai1 khau/, 'these'
Approximate	/amaeu4 nai1/, 'that near you'	/amaeu4 nai1 khau/, 'those by you'
Distal	/an3 pu:n nai1/, 'that over there'	/an3 pu:n nai1 nai1 khau/, 'those over there'

Writing system

The Tai Khamtis have their own writing system called 'Lik-Tai', which they share with the Tai Phake people and Tai Aiton people.^[2] It closely resembles the Northern Shan alphabet of Myanmar, which is a variant of the Burmese script, with some of the letters taking divergent shapes^[8]. Their script is evidently derived from the Lik Hto Ngauk script since hundreds of years ago. There are 35 letters including 17 consonants and 14 vowels. The script is traditionally taught in monasteries on subjects like tripitaka, Jataka tales, code of conduct, doctrines and philosophy, history, law codes, astrology, and palmistry etc. The first printed book was published in 1960. In 1992 it was edited by the Tai Literature Committee, Chongkham. In 2003 it was again modified with tone marking by scholars of Northern Myanmar and Arunachal Pradesh.

Further reading

- Thai Khamti Grammar (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190420224836/http://www.iitg.ac.in/rcilts/phase1/language/s/khamti.htm>)
- Inglis, Douglas. (forthcoming) Khamti Shan anti-ergative construction: a Tibeto-Burman influence? *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area*. 40(2).
- Inglis, Douglas. 2014. This here thing: Specifying Morphemes an3, nai1, and mai2 in Tai Khamti Reference-point Constructions (https://www.academia.edu/9831142/PhD_dissertation_This_here_thing_Specifying_Morphemes_an3_nai1_mai2_in_Tai_Khamti_Reference-point_Constructions). PhD Dissertation. The University of Alberta.
- Inglis, Douglas. 2013. Oral stop consonants in Tai Khamti: An acoustic study in voice onset time (https://www.academia.edu/7152890/Oral_stop_consonants_in_Tai_Khamti_An_acoustic_study_in_voice_onset_time). Paper presented at ISCTLL46. Dartmouth College.
- Inglis, Douglas. 2013. Deictic mai2 'here' as an object marker in Khamti Shan: A Tibeto-Burman influence in Tai? (https://www.academia.edu/12925697/Deictic_mai2_here_as_an_object_marker_in_Khamti_Shan_A_Tibeto-Burman_influence_in_TaiDeictic_mai2). Paper presented at ISCTLL46. Dartmouth College.
- Inglis, Douglas. 2004. Preliminary report: Khamti Shan wordlist and lexicostatistical results (https://www.academia.edu/7152885/Preliminary_report_Khamti_Shan_wordlist_and_lexicostatistical_results). Payap University. Chiang Mai.

References

1. Khamti (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/kht/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
2. Diller, Anthony (1992). "Tai languages in Assam: Daughters or Ghosts": 16.
3. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Khamti" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/kham1290>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
4. "Khamti" (<http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/lang/1425>). *Endangered Languages Project*. Retrieved 2 May 2015.
5. "Khamti" (<http://www.iitg.ernet.in/rcilts/phase1/languages/khamti.htm>). *Khamti - A Language of Siamese-Chinese sub-family*. Retrieved 7 May 2015.
6. Needham, J.F. (1894). *Outline Grammar of the Khamti Language* (<http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081855326;view=1up;seq=9>). Government Printing, Burma.
7. Diller, Anthony (1992). "Tai languages in Assam: Daughters or Ghosts": 14.
8. Inglis, Douglas (2017). "Myanmar-based Khamti Shan Orthography" (https://www.academia.edu/34791306/_2017_Myanmar-based_Khamti_Shan_Orthography).
9. Wilaiwan Kanittanan. 1986. Khamti Tai: From an SVO to an SOV language. In Bhadriraju Krishnamurti (ed.), *South Asian Languages: Structure, Convergence and Diglossia*, 174-178. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
10. Inglis, Douglas (2007). "Nominal Structure in Tai Khamti" (https://www.academia.edu/35155172/Nominal_Structure_in_Tai_Khamti). Retrieved 13 June 2020.

External links

- Mung huw Tai Khamti Song (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WHlwaxXNUd0&index=18&list=PLm4JemopK8s7TBsVCx8ceivISNr9-c11C>)
- Tai-Khamti Song - Tai-Khamti Girls (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSKwfipAlZ0&index=10&list=PLm4JemopK8s7TBsVCx8ceivISNr9-c11C>)
- Tai-Khamti Talk (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qt2yyKqIQks&list=PLm4JemopK8s7TBsVCx8ceivISNr9-c11C&index=9>)
- Words of Life Khamti People/Language Movie Trailer (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUsvfPol214>)
- Tai Khamti Song - Mung hau (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulZqwsFXG6s>)
- Tai Khamti Song - panlong sau (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DgwjrjDojgs>)

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